

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 28, 2013

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veteran's Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

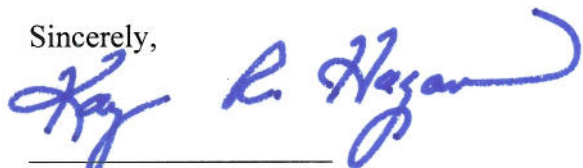
According to a recent memo from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regional office in Winston-Salem, more than 7,000 veterans have been waiting at least a year for that office to rule on their disability claims. For more than 700 veterans, the wait has dragged on for over two years. This is an unacceptable way to care for the men and women who have put their lives on the line for our country.

The delays for veterans in North Carolina have only gotten worse. It takes an average of 341 days to process claims at the Veterans Benefits Administration's claims office in Winston-Salem, up from 329 days in September. The office, which handles most North Carolina cases, including those from Fayetteville and the Cape Fear region, has the second-longest wait time in the Agency's southeastern region. I'm sure you agree that these delays, which fall far short of the Agency's stated goal of processing all claims within 125 days, are deplorable.

While the figures alone are alarming, I am also greatly concerned that the current system in place in the Winston-Salem office is not capable of clearing this backlog. For that reason, I am asking you to take a personal interest in solving this issue and dispatch senior officials from the VA Headquarters in Washington to North Carolina to ensure the Winston-Salem regional office receives the necessary assistance and resources to rapidly address their backlog and adopt procedures to prevent similar problems from occurring again in the future.

I am proud that almost one million veterans call North Carolina home, in part because our communities have opened their arms wide for these heroes. I am deeply committed to keeping our promises to our veterans and maintaining North Carolina's reputation as the most military and veteran friendly state in the country. I will continue working to ensure that our veterans receive the care and support they deserve. I hope you will give this matter the attention it deserves.

Sincerely,



Kay R. Hagan
United States Senate